

FIREARM SHOT HELMET DETECTION SYSTEM AND METHOD OF USE

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS:

[01] This is a continuation-in-part of application 10/630,120 filed on July 30, 2003, which is a continuation-in-part of application 10/440,071 filed on May 15, 2003, which is a continuation-in-part of application 09/908,309 filed on July 17, 2001, which is now U.S. Pat. No. 6,600,417, which is a continuation of application 09/588,863 filed on June 6, 2000, which is now U.S. Pat. No. 6,288,643, which claims the benefit of the following U.S. Provisional Applications: U.S. application Ser. No. 60/137,962 entitled "Graffiti Detection System," filed June 7, 1999; U.S. application Ser. No. 60/180,771 entitled "Olfactory Detection of Graffiti," filed Feb. 7, 2000; and U.S. application Ser. No. 60/194,082 entitled "Acoustical Detection of Firearm," filed March 27, 2000.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[02] The present invention relates, in general, to sonic detection systems and methods, and, in particular, to firearm shot detection systems.

2. Related Art

[03] The following description of the background of the invention is intended to aid in the understanding of the invention, but is not admitted to describe or constitute prior art to the invention.

[04] In the past, when a crime was committed, the police would often show up at the scene of the crime without knowing whether the perpetrator of the crime was still in the area of crime scene, and, if so, whether the perpetrator was carrying a lethal weapon such as a firearm that had been discharged. If the police knew one or more shots of a firearm had occurred at a crime scene such as by the perpetrator or by a victim in defense, the police would know that investigating the crime may be dangerous, and that possibly someone at the scene may be severely injured. The police could prepare accordingly and alert the appropriate medical agencies.

[05] In-field marines or soldiers (hereinafter “fighters”) often find themselves being shot at by enemy fighters. In addition to the problem of having to discern whether a firearm shot is truly a firearm shot and not, for example, a firecracker, fighters have to discern the source of the enemy fire. This can be difficult, especially if the enemy fire only involves a single shot or a few shots.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[06] Thus, an aspect of the present invention involves the recognition that a need exists for a firearm shot detection system and method that is capable of detecting and reporting a firearm shot as it occurs, and the directional source of the firearm shot.

[07] Another aspect of the invention involves a method of using a firearm shot helmet detection system. The method includes providing a firearm shot detection system comprising a plurality of helmets worn by respective mobile fighters, each helmet

including a firearm shot detection system that detects the presence and geographical origination of a firearm shot, and wirelessly communicates with other firearm shot detection systems of other respective helmets; detecting the presence of a firearm shot with the firearm shot detection system of each helmet; wirelessly communicating distance information on the detected firearm shot with the other firearm shot detection systems of other respective helmets; and determining the geographical origination of the firearm shot using triangulation based on the distance information on the detected firearm shot.

[08] A further aspect of the invention involves a method of using a helmet monitoring camera system for a fighter. The method includes providing a helmet monitoring camera system including a helmet on a head of the fighter, the helmet monitoring camera system including a front, a right, a left, and a back, one or more monitoring cameras carried by the helmet to view objects in at least the back of the helmet, and a screen in the front of the helmet to view the objects in at least the back of the helmet; imaging objects in at least the back of the helmet with the one or more monitoring cameras; and viewing images of the objects in at least the back of the helmet taken by the one or more monitoring cameras with the screen in the front of the helmet.

[09] Other and further objects, features, aspects. and advantages of the present invention will become better understood with the following detailed description of the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[10] The drawings illustrate both the design and utility of preferred embodiments of the present invention, in which:

[11] FIG. 1 is an illustration of an embodiment of a graffiti detection system and method in an exemplary environment.

[12] FIG. 2 is a block diagram of an embodiment of the graffiti detection system illustrated in FIG. 1.

[13] FIG. 3A is block diagram of an embodiment of a time domain characterization mechanism.

[14] FIG. 3B is a block diagram of an alternative embodiment of a time domain characterization mechanism.

[15] FIGS. 3C is a block diagram of an embodiment of a camera that may be used with the graffiti detection system (and the other detection systems described herein).

[16] FIG. 3D is a flow chart of an exemplary method of using the camera illustrated in FIG. 3C.

[17] FIG. 4A is an illustration of an embodiment of a detection system similar to that illustrated in FIGS. 1-3, but for use in detection of a firearm shot, and is shown in an exemplary environment.

[18] FIG. 4B is an illustration of an alternative embodiment of a firearm shot detection system and method and is shown in an alternative exemplary environment.

[19] FIG. 4C is a flow chart illustrating an exemplary method for confirming that a firearm shot has occurred.

[20] FIG. 4D is a top schematic view of an embodiment of a firearm shot helmet detection system.

[21] FIG. 4E is a top schematic view of an embodiment of a helmet monitoring camera system.

[22] FIG. 4F is a top schematic view of an additional embodiment of a helmet monitoring camera system.

[23] FIG. 4G is a top schematic view of a further embodiment of a helmet monitoring camera system.

[24] FIG. 5 is an illustration of an embodiment of a detection system similar to that illustrated in FIGS. 1-3, but for use in detection of a vehicle tire leak, and is shown in an exemplary environment.

[25] FIG. 6 is an illustration of an embodiment of a detection system similar to that illustrated in FIGS. 1-3, but for use in detecting the use of equipment such as a computer, and is shown in an exemplary environment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[26] With reference to FIG. 1, an embodiment of a graffiti detection system 100 and method of using the same will now be described. The graffiti detection system 100 detects a graffiti-making act and initiates one or more alarms to indicate that a graffiti-

making act occurred. Examples of graffiti-making acts that are capable of being detected by the system 100 include, but not by way of limitation, the spraying noise that occurs with the spraying or tagging of a surface with a spray paint can, the rattling noise that occurs when shaking a spray paint can to mix the paint inside, the sound of a felt marker on a surface as the surface is being marked, and the sound of an abrasive device such as a glass cutter, diamond, razor, etc. as it scratches, defaces, or etches a surface such as glass. The graffiti detection system 100 includes one or more primary sensors 110 and a control unit or base unit 120.

[27] Each primary sensor 110 is preferably a sonic sensor capable of picking up sound waves and converting the sound waves into electronic signals for further processing. Each sonic sensor may be capable of sensing a wide variety of sound frequencies, even sounds in the ultrasound frequency range. Examples of sensors 110 that may be used as a sonic sensor include, but not by way of limitation, a piezoelectric sensor, a dynamic sensor, an electret sensor, a carbon sensor, a bolometer sensor, an optical reflection sensor, a capacitive sensor, an inductive sound sensor, and an ultrasonic sensor used to detect and respond to specific sound spectrum patterns.

[28] A graffiti-making act 130 such as the spraying noise from an aerosol spray paint can 140 by a perpetrator or tagger 150 has a specific sound spectrum frequency pattern or sound signature. The one or more sensors 110 may convert the sound of the spraying noise into a corresponding electronic signal.

[29] Depending on the type of sonic sensor, each sensor 110 may be adapted to pick up a narrow frequency range or individual frequency of sound waves or a broad frequency spectrum of sound waves.

[30] In the first instance, detection of a graffiti-making act 130 may occur, in essence, at the sensor 110. The system 100 may rely more on the inherent frequency characteristics of sensor(s) 110 for identification of a sound signature of a graffiti making act 130. For example, the sensor(s) 110 may only transmit a single frequency signal, e.g., a 900 megahertz signal, if a certain frequency or certain frequencies of sound are picked up by the sensor(s) 110. Thus, a specific sensor 110 may be used to detect a specific graffiti-making act 130, without the requirement of much identification processing by the base unit 120. In this embodiment, if the specific sensor 110 transmits an electronic signal, the base unit 120 may be able to assume, except for some minor processing and possible confirmation, that the specific graffiti-making act 110, which the specific sensor 110 is adapted to sense, has occurred. In this embodiment, different sensors 110 may be assigned to sense different graffiti-making acts 130, one or more of which may be used in the system 100. For example, a sensor A may be used to detect the spraying noise that occurs with the spraying or tagging of a surface with a spray paint can, a sensor B may be used to detect the sound of the rattling noise that occurs when shaking a spray paint can to mix the paint inside, a sensor C may be used to detect the sound of a felt marker on a surface as the surface is being marked, and a sensor D may be used to detect the sound of an abrasive device

such as a glass cutter, diamond, razor, etc. as it scratches, defaces, or etches a surface such as glass.

[31] In the latter instance, detection of a graffiti-making act 130 may occur, in essence, at the base unit 120. The system 100 may rely more on the base unit 120 to identify a graffiti-making act 130. In this embodiment, the sensor(s) 110 may pick up a broader range of frequencies and transmit them to the base unit 120 as a spread. spectrum signal for processing and identification. Thus, in order to reduce the number of sensors used to detect a number of different types of graffiti-making acts, a single sensor 110 may be used to sense all the sound frequencies or sound frequency ranges of the graffiti-making acts 130 of interest and use the base unit 120 to process and determine whether the transmitted signal(s) correspond to a graffiti-making act.

[32] The sensor(s) 110 may be one or more of the same or different types of sensors 110. For example, the sensor(s) 110 may include multiple sonic sensors of one or more different sonic sensor types. For example, as described above, specific sensors may be adapted to pick up specific sound frequencies or ranges of sound frequencies. The different types of sensors 110 may be used to pick up different frequency ranges for the same type of graffiti-making act, e.g., different frequency ranges for different spray noises made from different types of spray paint cans, or to pick up different frequency ranges for different types of graffiti-making acts, e.g., a first sensor may be used to detect spray painting, a second sensor may be used to detect the sound of a felt marker on a surface as the surface is being marked, etc.

[33] Further, not only may the one or more sensors 110 be one or more different types of sonic sensors, the one or more sensors 110 may include one or more sensors other than sonic sensors in addition to or instead of one or more sonic sensors. For example, the one or more sensors 110 may include one or more olfactory sensors in addition to or instead of the one or more sonic sensors. An exemplary olfactory sensor that may be used in the system 100 is the NOSE CHIP.TM. made by Cyrano Sciences, Inc. of Pasadena, Calif. An olfactory sensor may be used in conjunction with the base unit 120 to sense the presence of one or more odors indicative of a graffiti-making act. For example, the olfactory sensor may be used to sense the odor of the propellant from a spray paint can, one or more other chemicals such as those from the paint of a spray paint can, the odor of xylene from a felt-tip marker, etc. One or more olfactory sensors may be used as one or more primary sensors 110 or primary means for detecting the occurrence of a graffiti-making act 130 or as a secondary sensor 335 or secondary means for confirming the occurrence of a graffiti-making act 130.

[34] The one or more sensors 110 may communicate wirelessly with the base unit 120 or may be wired to the base unit 120. In a wireless embodiment, the one or more sensors 110 include a transmitter for wirelessly transmitting the signal(s) to the base unit 120 and a battery or other power supply. If one or more wireless piezoelectric sensors are used, the sensor(s) 110 may be located up to a distance of 400 ft. from the base unit 120 and still communicate therewith. If a 2.4 GHz sensor is used, the sensor(s) 110 may be located at a distance greater than 400 ft. from the base unit 120. A wireless piezoelectric sensor can also sense the noise from a graffiti making at a

distance of 1000 ft or more from the graffiti-making act, especially if focusing or baffling mechanisms are used.

[35] It is important to note, although the one or more sensors 110 are shown in FIG. 1 as being separate or remote from the base unit 120, in an alternative embodiment, the one or more sensors 110 may be integrated with the base unit 120 so that the system 100 forms a single unit. Further, one or more of the sensors 110 may be integrated with the base unit 120 and separate therefrom.

[36] The one or more sensors 110 are preferably small, a few inches or less in size, making the sensor(s) 110 easy to conceal. The one or more sensors 100 are preferably strategically located at one or more locations in a vicinity 170 of a surface 180 prone to graffiti. The one or more sensors 110 may be mounted in direct contact with a surface such as, but not by way of limitation, a glass surface, a concrete wall, a brick wall, and the side of a building. Preferably, each sensor 110 is mounted at a location that is inconspicuous and inhibits tampering or deactivation.

[37] The distance between the one or more sonic sensors and the graffiti-making act may be increased, allowing sensing from a more distant, inconspicuous position, if one or more sound focusing mechanisms 190 are used. Examples of sound focusing mechanisms that may effectively increase the signal-to-noise ratio of the sound detected by the one or more sonic sensors include, but not by way of limitation, a parabolic reflector, boom, shotgun directional microphone, phase array, or lens. FIG. 1 illustrates a sound focusing mechanism 190 in the form of a parabolic reflector adjacent

to one of the sensors 110 in order to increase the signal-to-noise ratio of the sound detected by the sensor 110.

[38] With reference additionally to FIGS. 2 and 3, the base unit 120 is also preferably strategically located in the vicinity 170 of the surface 180 prone to graffiti, at a location that is inconspicuous and inhibits tampering or deactivation. The base unit 120 may include a water-resistant housing 200 made of metal or plastic. The base unit 120 may include electronics 210 comprising hardware or hardware and software that processes the signal(s) from the one or more sensors 110, and initiates one or more alarms if a graffiti-making act is identified. The hardware and/or software of the base unit 120 may also determine whether a graffiti-making act 130 occurred by determining whether the signal(s) from the one or more sensors 110 correspond to a graffiti-making act. The hardware and/or software may also perform other functions described herein. Examples of hardware that may perform the functions described herein include, but not by way of limitation, an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC), a set of wired logic circuits, and a hardwired circuit of electrical components, e.g., transistors, capacitors, and resistors. Examples of hardware and software that may perform the functions described herein include, but not by way of limitation, a programmed computer and an application specific computer.

[39] In an embodiment of the base unit 120, the hardware and/or software may include a preamplifier 220, a mixer 230, a low pass filter 240, a precision rectifier 250, and a time domain characterization mechanism 260. The preamplifier 220, the mixer 230, the low pass filter 240, and the precision rectifier 250 may form part of a sensor

interface for processing the incoming signal(s) from the one or more sensors 110, which will now be described. A signal from the one or more sensors 110 is amplified by the preamplifier 220 to a distinguishable level. The mixer 230 may combine the resulting signal with a predetermined center frequency from a local oscillator 270. If the frequency of the signal from the one or more sensors 110 closely matches the frequency of the local oscillator signal, heterodyning occurs, producing a high gain product signal. Next, the low pass filter 240 and the precision rectifier 250 combine to improve the signal to noise ratio by eliminating noise such as AC signals and passing only DC signals. The signal may then be authenticated, i.e., a determination may be made as to whether the signal represents a graffiti-making act, by the time domain characterization mechanism 260.

[40] With reference to FIG. 3A, in an embodiment of the time domain characterization mechanism 260, the time domain characterization mechanism 260 may include a charge pump 270 for determining whether the signal represents a graffiti-making act 130. The charge pump 270 may include an electric circuit having one or more capacitors. The incoming signal charges the one or more capacitors, causing a rise in voltage over time until a signature signal of sufficient duration is authenticated, i.e., signal is transmitted to the one or more capacitors for a predetermined period of time determined by the time constant selected. Requiring that a signature signal be transmitted for a certain period of time helps to ensure that a graffiti-making act is accurately identified. After the signal is identified, a comparator is triggered, causing an alarm 280 (FIG. 2) to be actuated. This embodiment of the time domain characterization

mechanism 260 may be desirable if the one or more sensors 110 are adapted to pick up a narrow sound frequency range or individual sound frequency similar to or the same as that of a predetermined graffiti-making act because the components of the electronics 210 described above assume that if a signal is transmitted to the electronics 210, the signal is similar to or the same as that of a graffiti-making act, i.e., the one or more sensors 110 only deliver a signal if the frequency of the signal is similar to or the same as that of a graffiti-making act. The charge pump 270 functions to set a minimum time duration condition on the sound sensed by the one or more sensors 110, inhibiting false alarms caused by transient sounds from non-graffiti-making acts of the same or similar frequency. Thus, the charge pump 270 serves to authenticate the signal as one by a graffiti-making act by ensuring the signal is of a predetermined duration as determined by the type of capacitor used.

[41] With reference to FIG. 3B, in an alternative embodiment, the time domain characterization mechanism 260 may include a quantization characterization mechanism 290. The quantization characterization mechanism 290 may include a microprocessor 300, which may be the same as or different from any other microprocessor used in the system 100, and memory 310. The microprocessor 300 may use a digital signal processing application 320 stored in memory 310 to convert an analog signal from the low pass filter 240 into a digitized signal, and quantize the resulting digital signal. The resulting quantitized information may be compared to a matrix of numbers 330 stored in memory 310 or a different memory for authentication of the signal(s) from the one or more sensors 110. The memory 310 may include multiple

matrices of numbers 330 representing multiple respective predetermined graffiti-making acts 130 that the quantitized information from one or more signals may be compared to for determining the occurrence of multiple graffiti-making acts 130. The quantitized information may also include the duration of the signal(s) to ensure that the signal(s) is for at least a minimum duration to ensure that a graffiti-making act is accurately identified, inhibiting false alarms. After the signal is identified, the microprocessor 300 may cause the alarm 280 (FIG. 2) to be actuated. This embodiment of the time domain characterization mechanism 260 is desirable if the one or more sensors 110 are adapted to pick up a broad sound frequency range or different broad sound frequency ranges because the quantization characterization mechanism 290 may identify the signals from one or more different types of graffiti-making acts, allowing the graffiti detection system 100 to detect one or more different types of graffiti-making acts.

[42] Those skilled in the art will recognize other well-known sound signature identification techniques may be used such as, but not by way of limitation, digitized algorithm analysis and Fourier Transform analysis.

[43] The electronics 210 of the base unit 120 may include one or more of the following secondary sensors 335 or confirming means to confirm or further ensure that a graffiti-making act 130 occurred: a motion sensor to detect motion of the tagger 150, a heat sensor to sense body heat of the tagger 150, an olfactory sensor to detect an odor of a graffiti-making act, and a sonic sensor to detect a sound of a graffiti-making act.

[44] The alarm 280 initiated or actuated after a graffiti-making act has occurred may include, but not by way of limitation, one or more of the following: an alarm to alert the

tagger 150 and/or anyone in the vicinity that a graffiti-making act has been detected such as a bell, a light, a horn, a whistle, or a speaker; a marking mechanism adapted to mark the tagger 150 so that the police can easily identify the tagger 150 and have probable cause to arrest the tagger 150; a water sprinkler to wash the tagged surface 180; an infrared security video camera for recording and/or monitoring the tagger 150 committing the graffiti-making act 130, a flash camera to capture a still image of the tagger 150 committing the graffiti-making act, a disabling mechanism such as a cage, trap, e.g., two doors that automatically lock the tagger 150 in an area therebetween; and one or more communication devices 340 or interfaces. In a preferred embodiment, the alarm 280 does not alert the tagger 150 that a graffiti-making act has been detected by the system 100, but causes the communication device 340 to communicate to one or more entities or locations such as, but not by way of limitation, a police dispatcher so that a nearby police officer can be alerted as to the situation, one or more police officers on patrol in the general area of the graffiti-making act, an owner of the property where the graffiti-making act took place, and/or a security system center that a graffiti-making act has occurred. The communication device 340 may be any well-known communication device such as, but not by way of limitation, a dialer, a modem, a network interface (such as an Ethernet card), a communications port, a PCMCIA slot and card, a short-wave radio, etc. that may communicate voice, text, and/or video information to the one or more entities or locations. For example, the communication device 340 may be a dialer that dials one or more predetermined telephone numbers, pager numbers, wireless cellular or digital telephone numbers, and/or internet phone or

device numbers for communicating a prerecorded voice, text message, and/or video clip indicating that the graffiti-making act took place. The voice and/or text message may include one or more of the following: the location of the graffiti-marking act, the type of graffiti-marking act, and/or the time the graffiti marking act took place.

[45] In a preferred embodiment, a dialer is used as the communication device 340 and is capable of both listening at the site where detection has occurred as well as receiving audio and voice messages. The ability to listen as well as emit voice messages at the site where detection has occurred may be used to confirm that a graffiti-making act took place and is not, for example, an owner or city employee lawfully spray painting a surface. The ability to listen may be used to record voice or other sound activity as evidence for a later criminal proceeding, e.g., record voice of the perpetrator that committed the graffiti. The ability to emit an audio and voice message may also be used to confront the perpetrator.

[46] The electronics 210 of the base unit 120 may include an automatic location identification device 350 such as a Global Positioning System ("GPS") device for automatically identifying the location of the base unit 120. Alternatively, the base unit 120 may include a broadcasting mechanism 360 that broadcasts a signal from which the location of the system 100 can be identified and/or that a graffiti-making act 130 has been committed.

[47] If the one or more sensors 110 are wireless, the base unit 120 preferably includes one or more receivers 370 for receiving the respective signal(s) and transmitting the signal(s) to the electronics 210 of the base unit 120.

[48] The base unit 120 is preferably powered by one or more batteries 380, but may be powered by any well-known internal or external power source. If the battery 380 gets low, the electronics 210 may cause the communication device 340 to communicate to one or more entities responsible for replacing the battery 380 that the battery 380 is low and needs to be replaced.

[49] As mentioned above, the detection system 100 may include a confirming means to confirm or further ensure that a graffiti-making act 130 occurred or an alarm actuated after a graffiti-making act 130 occurs. In one embodiment, the confirming means or alarm may be a motion sensor or a video camera. For example, a video camera confirming means may comprise a surveillance monitoring camera and image processing method for taking an image of the perpetrator 150 and transmitting the image to one or more remote entities or locations described above (e.g., a police dispatcher, one or more police officers on patrol in the general area of the graffiti-making act, an owner of the property where the graffiti-making act took place, and/or a security system center).

[50] With reference to FIG. 3C, an embodiment of a surveillance monitoring camera 400 that may be used to obtain one or more images of the vicinity 170 of the surface 180 prone to graffiti upon detection of a graffiti making act and transmit the images to one or more remote entities or locations for confirmatory or evidentiary purposes will now be described. An exemplary camera that may be used includes, but not by way of limitation, the I-Rec Cam 104 sold by WEBGATE INC., of South Korea (the "I-Rec Cam"). The I-Rec Cam has a built-in hard drive to store recorded images and 4

channels are available for external camera connection. The I-Rec Cam is an all in one camera, DVR, network server, and quad split. Video compression is done by wavelet compression so that image file sizes are about five times smaller than comparable JPEG files for efficient storage and image viewing.

[51] The monitoring camera 400 may comprise an image signal receiver 402, an image signal decoder 404, an image signal compressor 406, a controller 408, a storage device 410, a sensor 412, and a communication interface or device 414. In the illustrated embodiment, the image signal decoder 404 is coupled to the image signal receiver 402, the image signal compressor is coupled to the image signal decoder 404, the controller 408 is coupled to the image signal compressor 406, the sensor 412 is coupled to the controller 408, the storage device 410 is coupled to the controller 408, and the communication interface 414 is coupled to the controller 408 and to an outside communications network. Other arrangements may also be employed as will be understood by one having skill in the art. Preferably, the controller 408 is in communication with the image signal receiver 402, the image signal decoder 404, the image signal compressor 406, the sensor 412, the storage device 410 and the communication interface 414 in order to manage their operation and utilization by the camera 400.

[52] With reference additionally to FIG. 3D, an exemplary operation of the monitoring camera 400 and an exemplary image processing/transmitting method of the monitoring camera 400 will now be described.

[53] Upon sonic detection of a graffiti-making act, the camera 400 may be activated so that the image signal receiver 402 receives image signals, that is, optical signals, and converts the optical signals into electrical signals to be output to the image signal decoder 404 in step 430. The output electrical signals are analog signals. A device that converts the optical signals into electrical signals, such as a charge coupled device (CCD), may be used as the image signal receiver 402.

[54] The image signal decoder 404 receives the analog electrical image signals from the image signal receiver 402 and converts them into digital signals in step 432. The image signal compressor 406 compresses the digital signals output from the image signal decoder 404 using an image compression method in step 434. Exemplary image signal compression methods include, but are not limited to, one or more of a wavelet method, a joint photographic experts group (JPEG) method, a moving picture experts group (MPEG) method, and a fractal conversion method. The reason for compressing the digital image signals is to reduce the amount of data in the digital image signals and to improve the usage efficiency of the storage device 410 in the camera 400.

[55] Preferably, a wavelet or modified wavelet image signal compression is used. Wavelet images are court admissible (or are more likely to be court admissible) compared to standard MPEG or JPEG images.

[56] A wavelet is a mathematical function useful in digital signal processing and image compression. In signal processing, wavelets make it possible to recover weak signals from noise. Images processed in this way can be "cleaned up" without blurring or muddling the details. In Internet communications, wavelets are used to compress

images to a greater extent than is generally possible with other methods. In some cases, a wavelet-compressed image can be as small as about 25 percent the size of a similar-quality image using the more familiar JPEG method. Wavelet compression works by analyzing an image and converting it into a set of mathematical expressions that can then be decoded by the receiver. A wavelet-compressed image file is often given a name suffix of "WIF." A web browser may support these files or a web browser may require a plug-in program to read the files.

[57] The storage device 410 is installed in the monitoring camera 400 and stores the digital data compressed in the image signal compressor 406 in step 436. Exemplary storage devices include, but are not limited to, one or more of a semiconductor based memory (e.g., PROM, EPROM, EEPROM, or Flash), a hard disk drive (HDD), a compact disc (CD), a digital versatile disc (DVD), a mini disk (MD), a magnetic tape, or a memory card. When using one or more of the above-noted storage devices 410 in the camera 400, the total volume of the camera 400 does not greatly increase.

[58] The sensor 412 checks the conditions of the places of which the pictures are taken (e.g., the vicinity 170 of the surface 180 prone to graffiti). It is not efficient for the camera 400 to continuously take photographs and store the image signals. Hence, the sensor 412 detects movements of physical objects in those places which are under surveillance and reports the detection results to the controller 408. The controller 408 allows the camera 400 to operate only when the sensor 412 detects the movements of physical objects. In an alternative embodiment, the controller 408 may cause the

camera 400 to automatically obtain an image of the vicinity upon sonic detection of a graffiti-making act, regardless of whether movement is detected by the sensor 412.

[59] The controller 408 controls the conversion operation of the image signals of the image signal receiver 402 into the electrical signals, conversion operation of the signals of the image signal decoder 404 into the digital signals, and compression operation of the image signal compressor 406. Additionally, according to the information on areas under surveillance detected by the sensor 412, the controller 408 determines whether to store and receive the image signals provided to the image signal receiver 402, and controls the operation of the camera 400 as well as the operation of receiving and transmitting the image signals taken by the camera 400 through the communication interface 414.

[60] The communication interface 414, which may be a central managing device for the control of the operations of each camera 400, may transmit information on the operations of the surveillance monitoring camera 400 (and/or graffiti detection system 100) and image signals taken by the camera 400 to the one or more remote locations or entities described above. A person who remotely manages the monitoring camera 400 (and/or graffiti detection system 100) may check for any malfunction of the camera 400 (and/or graffiti detection system 100) or a communication failure. The monitoring camera 400 may be connected to a local-area network (LAN) or a wide-area network (WAN) through an Ethernet system, a modulator/demodulator (MODEM), or a radio frequency (RF) transceiver. Preferably, the communication interface 414 is connected to the Internet so that an authorized Internet user may view the images of the camera

400 in real time using an Internet browser. Since the monitoring camera 400 converts the image signals taken into digital image signals and compresses and stores the digital signals, it is easy to transmit and receive the image signals and to configure a network system for managing multiple monitoring cameras 400. The communication interface 414 may be the same or different from the communication device 340 described above.

[61] The camera 400 may be a compact-all-in-one web camera server. Examples of different compact-all-in-one web camera servers that may be used include, but not by way of limitation, the WebEye E10 & E104, the WebEye SPD (All-in-one web camera server with pan/tilt/zoom mechanism), or the WebEye E20 (Two Channel Video Server, with which zoom lens could be mounted without aid of a PTZ controller), all of which are sold by WEBGATE Inc., of South Korea. In such an embodiment, the camera 400 may include an Internet server, a CCD module, digital image compressor, network electronics, and a homepage on the Internet for the camera. Functional firmware of the camera 400 may be saved in a flash memory chip so that firmware can be upgraded remotely through Internet. Audio at the location prone to receiving graffiti may be received, processed, and communicated to the one or more entities with the camera 400.

[62] With the camera 400 connected to the Internet, real-time image monitoring of the vicinity 170 of the surface 180 prone to graffiti is done from one or more remote places via one or more web browsers. Upon detection of a graffiti making act by the graffiti detection system, one or more images taken by the camera 400 of the perpetrator 150 in the act may be communicated to the one or more entities described above. The one

or more images may be automatically sent via one or more email communications (or by another communication method) to the one or more entities or locations upon sonic detection of a graffiti making act. Once notified either by a communication with the image(s) or without the image(s), the one or more entities may confirm real-time presence of the perpetrator 150 by the image(s) received, and/or by going to the assigned website of the camera 400 and remotely viewing in real time the vicinity 170 of the surface 180 prone to graffiti. Once on the website, images of the vicinity 170 of the surface 180 are communicated in real time to the observer's computer and observed with the observer's browser. Operation of the camera 400 (e.g., pan, tilt, zoom) may be remotely controlled by the remote observer to view much of the vicinity 170 to determine if the perpetrator 150 is present. If the perpetrator 150 is not observed at the location, the one or more entities may determine a false alarm occurred and police (or other security) attention may not be required. However, if a perpetrator 150 is observed at the location, the police (or other security) may go to the location to attempt to apprehend the perpetrator 150.

[63] Although the detection system 100 has been described above in conjunction with detection of a graffiti-making act, it will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art that the detection system 100 may be used in other applications to detect other occurrences, besides detecting graffiti. Further, the description of the surveillance monitoring camera 400 in the paragraphs immediately above may also apply to the other detection systems (500, 600, 700, 800) described below. Accordingly, one or more of the features described above with respect to the detection system 100 and the camera 400 may be

incorporated with the detection systems (500, 600, 700, 800) described below, and the discussion above with respect to the detection system 100 and the camera 400 are hereby incorporated by reference into the discussion sections of the other systems (500, 600, 700, 800).

[64] For example, with reference to FIG. 4A, a detection system 500, which is similar in construction to the detection system 100 described above, may be used to detect the report of a firearm shot 510 from a firearm 520, e.g., a handgun, automatic weapon, rifle, etc., of a perpetrator 530, and an initiate an alarm in response thereto. In the past, when a crime was committed, the police would often show up at the scene of the crime without knowing whether the perpetrator(s) 530 were still in the area of crime scene, and, if so, whether the perpetrator(s) 530 were carrying a lethal weapon such as a firearm 520 that had been discharged. If the police knew one or more shots of a firearm had occurred at a crime scene, the police would know that investigating the crime may be dangerous. The police could prepare accordingly and alert the appropriate medical agencies. Thus, the inventors of the firearm shot detection system and method recognized that such a system and method could detect whether a firearm shot had occurred and alert the police accordingly.

[65] The firearm shot detection system 500 illustrated in FIG. 4A is for fixed use, i.e., the object that the firearm detection system 500 is mounted to is not designed to move or be mobile, such as in possible armed robbery situations. For example, the firearm shot detection system 500 may be mounted to a wall 540 or counter 545 of an establishment 550, e.g., a convenience store such as 7-Eleven.TM., a jewelry store, a

bank, a fast-food restaurant, a home, or any other establishment susceptible to an robbery, accidents, or violence involving a firearm. FIG. 4A illustrates an employee 560 such as a clerk behind the counter 545 of the establishment 550.

[66] The firearm shot detection system 500 includes a base unit 570 and one or more sensors 580. Instead of the one or more sensors 110 and/or base unit 120 described above with respect to FIGS. 1-3 being configured to determine whether the sound signature of an act such as a graffiti-making act occurred, the one or more sensors 580 and/or base unit 570 determine whether the sound signature of a firearm shot 510 occurred. In FIG. 4A, a single sonic sensor 580 is illustrated as being integrated with the base unit 570. As described above, in an alternative embodiment, the one or more sensors 580 may be separate or remote from the base unit 570.

[67] Because the firearm shot detection system 500 is so similar in construction to the graffiti detection system 100 described above, further details as to the construction or structure of the firearm shot detection system 500 will not be described in additional detail. The discussion above with respect to the construction of the graffiti detection system 100 is equally applicable to the firearm shot detection system 500, and is thereby incorporated by reference.

[68] An embodiment of a method of using the firearm shot detection system 500 will now be described. During a hold-up, burglary, robbery, etc., the perpetrator 530 of the crime (or the employee 560 of the establishment 550 in defense) may fire a firearm 120 such as a handgun, automatic weapon, rifle, etc. The report of the firearm shot 510 includes sound waves having a characteristic sound signature frequency or frequency

pattern. A firearm shot 510 from each type of firearm, e.g., handgun, automatic weapon, rifle, etc., and each brand of firearm, e.g., Smith & Wesson.TM., Colt.TM., etc. has a unique sound signature frequency or frequency pattern similar to each different graffiti-making acts having a unique sound signature frequency or frequency pattern, as described above. The one or more sensors 580 convert the sound from the firearm shot 510 into an electronic signal or electronic signals that are processed by the electronics 210 in the base unit 570 for determining whether the electronic signal(s) are from a firearm shot 510 using any of the techniques described above or any other well-known technique used in sound signature analysis. If it is determined that the electronic signal(s) represents a firearm shot, one or more alarms are initiated. The one or more alarms may include one or more of the alarms described above with respect to the graffiti detection system 100 and method. One type of alarm that may be initiated upon detection of a firearm shot 510 is the locking of one or more automatic locking mechanisms for one or more doors 590. This may be desirable, for example, to lock the perpetrator 530 in an area between a pair of door 590 assuming that no innocent bystanders are in this detaining area with the perpetrator. Preferably, the one or more alarms include actuating a communication to an entity or location such as a police dispatcher, one or more police officers in the area, and/or a security system center alerting the entity that a firearm shot 510 was detected at the location of the establishment. Communicated information may include, but not by way of limitation, a firearm shot 520 was detected, the location of the firearm shot, the time of the firearm shot, the number of firearm shots detected, and/or the type of firearm shot. Thus, the

firearm detection system 500 detects the sound signature of the report of one or more firearm shots, and may automatically alert the police in response thereto.

[69] With reference to FIG. 4B, in another embodiment of the invention, a firearm shot detection system 600 similar to the firearm shot detection system 500 described above may be mounted to a mobile object 610 or be part of the mobile object 610. Examples of mobile objects include, but not by way of limitation, a police car, a police motorcycle, an armed money truck, an emergency vehicle, a limousine, an expensive car, a navigational system such as a GPS system, a wireless phone, a wireless internet device, a radio communication system, and any other portable communication device. Police officers are often shot at when investigating a crime or in the process of making an arrest. If a police officer is alone and is shot, the police officer may not be found in time for appropriate medical care to arrive. Further, if the police officer becomes engaged in a gun fight with one or more perpetrators, the police officer may not be able to radio a police dispatcher or other police officers for assistance without the risk of getting shot or allowing the one or more perpetrators to escape.

[70] FIG. 4B illustrates a number of exemplary embodiments of and locations for the firearm shot detection system 600. For example, the firearm shot detection system 600 may be mounted on a mobile object 610 such as a police car driven by a police officer 620. The firearm shot detection system 600 may be in the vehicle, as part of a radio communication system of the police car. The firearm shot detection system 600 may also be a wearable device or part of a wearable device such as part of a mobile object 610 that is a two-way radio. Similar to the firearm shot detection system 500 described

above, the firearm shot detection system 600 detects the sound signature from the report of a firearm shot from a firearm 630 of a perpetrator 640, and may initiate one or more of the alarms described above. Preferably, the firearm shot detection system 600 will automatically communicate with a police dispatcher that a firearm shot has been detected. If the firearm shot detection system 600 is part of a communication device such as two-way radio or wireless phone, the firearm shot detection system 600 may communication with one or more entities such as a police dispatcher using the existing communication device. Similar to the detection system 100 described above, the firearm shot detection system 600 may include an automatic location identification device such as a GPS device for automatically identifying the location of the firearm shot detection system 600, and, hence, the general location of the firearm shot detected. The firearm shot detection system 600 may automatically report to the police dispatcher one or more of the following: a firearm shot was detected, the location of the firearm shot, the time of the firearm shot, the number of firearm shots detected, and/or the type of firearm shot.

[71] With reference to FIG. 4C, an exemplary method 645 performed by the firearm shot detection system 500, 600 for confirming that a firearm shot 510 occurred will be described. The method 645 detects whether a number of occurrences that happen almost simultaneously with a firearm shot 510 occur to confirm that a firearm shot 510 occurred instead of, for example, the bang from a firecracker or the backfire of an automobile.

[72] Upon discharge of the firearm 120, 630, there is a “bang” caused by the explosion of gunpowder when the firing cap is struck and ignites the gunpowder, which explodes, expanding gases in the barrel of the firearm 120, 630 and, thus, forcing the “round” or “bullet” to be forced down and out of the barrel of the firearm 120, 630. At step 650, the firearm shot detection system 500, 600 detects whether the “bang” of the gunpowder explosion in a firearm 120, 630 occurred. During this step, the one or more sensors 580 convert the “bang” of the gunpowder explosion from the firearm shot 510 into an electronic signal or electronic signals that are processed by the electronics 210 for determining whether the electronic signal(s) represent the “bang” of the gunpowder explosion from a firearm shot 510. If the “bang” is not detected, the method ends and the fire arm shot detection system 500, 600 is ready to detect a new possible firearm shot 510. If the “bang” is detected, control passes onto step 660.

[73] As the bullet and exploding gases exit the barrel, there is an attendant “flash”, which occurs at this time. The explosion of the gunpowder causes a loud audible sound, which also projects visual light, as well as infrared, ultraviolet and ultrasonic signals. At step 660, one or more of the visual light, infrared, ultraviolet and ultrasonic signals from the “flash” of exploding gases exiting the barrel are detected by the firearm shot detection system 500, 600. For example, but not by way of limitation, an infrared and/or UV camera or sensor may pick up the emitted infrared and/or UV component(s) of the emitted “flash” and one or more signals emitted from the infrared and/or UV camera or sensor may be processed by the electronics 210 for determining whether the signal(s) represent the “flash” of the exploding gases exiting the barrel. If the “flash” is not

detected, the method ends and the fire arm shot detection system 500, 600 is ready to detect a new possible firearm shot 510. If the “flash” is detected, control passes onto step 670.

[74] Within fractions of a second from the “bang” of the gunpowder explosion, the “round” or “bullet” passes through air at ultrasonic speeds, and as it passes the sound barrier, creates a “crack” or “cracking” sound, which is both audible to the human ear, as well as creating ultrasonic signals. At step 670, the firearm shot detection system 500, 600 detects whether the “crack” of the bullet passing through the sound barrier occurred. During this step, the one or more sensors 580 convert the “crack” of the bullet passing through the sound barrier into an electronic signal or electronic signals that are processed by the electronics 210 for determining whether the electronic signal(s) represent the “crack” of the bullet passing through the sound barrier. If the “crack” is not detected, the method ends and the fire arm shot detection system 500, 600 is ready to detect a new possible firearm shot 510. If the “crack” is detected, control passes onto step 680.

[75] If it is determined from steps 650, 660, 670 that a firearm shot 510 occurred, at step 680, one or more of the alarms described herein may be actuated. As one of the one or more alarms (or in addition to the one or more alarms), one or more images (e.g., video) of the location or vicinity around the firearm shot detection system 500, 600 may be covered or taken by a camera, which records time prior to the alarm, the occurrence of the circumstance causing the alarm, and an extensive period after the alarm. The one or more images (e.g., video) taken by the camera may be recorded for

replaying at a later time and/or transmitted over the Internet for “real time” viewing from a communication device such as, but not limited to, a computer, a hand-held “Palm” device, or Internet phone.

[76] The sensors capturing the various signals from the audio, ultrasonic, ultraviolet and infrared generated from the discharge of a firearm 120, 630 may be mounted in Internet-linked or GPS-linked cameras and transmitters. One or more additional sensors such as those used in step 670 for detecting the “crack” of the bullet breaking the sound barrier may be mounted in the general vicinity of the enclosed space or vehicle utilizing the firearm shot detection system 500, 600.

[77] Because the rapid occurrence of the audible “bang”, the “flash” of the visual, ultraviolet, infrared and ultrasonic signals, as well the subsequent “crack” of breaking the sound barrier is unique to the firearm shot 510, detection of these occurrences in steps 650, 660, 670 of the above method 645 confirms that the firearm shot 510 has been discharged. In alternative embodiments, the method 645 may include only two of the steps 650, 660, 670 for confirming the discharge of the firearm shot 510.

[78] With reference to FIG. 4D, an embodiment of a firearm shot helmet detection system (hereinafter “helmet system”) 681 constructed in accordance with an embodiment of the invention will be described. The helmet system 681 includes a plurality of helmets 682 (worn by marines or soldiers (hereinafter “fighters”)) wirelessly networked together via the communication devices 340 and configured to detect a firearm shot and determine the geographical origination 683 of the firearm shot.

[79] Each helmet 682 may include a firearm shot detection system 500, which may be similar to the firearm shot detection system 500 described above and wirelessly networked together with the other systems 500, and include electronics 210 and software to perform the following functions: 1) detecting the firearm shot(s); 2) determining a radial distance (e.g., see R1, R2, R3) of the firearm shot(s) from the helmet 682; 3) wirelessly communicating information via the communication device 340 on the radial distance of the firearm shot(s) to and from the helmets 682; 4) determining the geographical origination 683 of the firearm shot through triangulation (the origination 683 of the firearm shot occur at the intersection of circles C1, C2, C3 with respective radii R1, R2, R3), and 5) reporting the geographical origination 683 of the firearm shot to the fighter.

[80] As discussed above further above, the automatic location identification device 350 may be GPS device. The GPS device includes a receiver for automatically identifying the geographical location of each mobile fighter.

[81] The firearm shot detection system 500 may include a display screen (e.g., miniature flip-down screen 689, FIG. 4E) with a map showing the location of each fighter and the location of the geographical origination 683 of the firearm shot. The display screen may display graphics that represent the information shown in FIG. 4D. The graphics may also indicate the relative direction and/or distance of the geographical origination 683 of the firearm shot (e.g., compass direction, front, back, left, right) with respect to the fighter.

[82] Any of this information on the geographical origination 683 of the firearm shot may be audibly indicated to the fighter via an audible mechanism (e.g., one or more speakers) of the firearm shot detection system 500.

[83] The firearm shot detection system 500 may include a tactile mechanism (e.g., one or more vibrating devices) in one or more locations of the helmet 682 (e.g., front, back, left, right) to indicate the relative location of the geographical origination 683 of the firearm shot.

[84] It should be noted, the altitude or height of the geographical origination 683 of the firearm shot may also be determined (e.g., through the intersections of spherical radii) and reported to the fighter via the helmet 682 through graphics, sound, and/or tactile means. Thus, the three-dimensional geographical origination 683 of the firearm shot may be determined and reported with the wirelessly networked helmet system 681.

[85] With reference to FIG. 4E, a helmet 685 constructed in accordance with another embodiment of the invention may include a monitoring camera system 686 including one or more monitoring cameras 400 linked together to provide the fighter with 360-degree vision. The one or more monitoring cameras 400 may be similar to the monitoring cameras 400 discussed above with respect to FIGS. 3C, 3D or may include one or more additional or fewer components compared to the camera 400 described above.

[86] The number and type of monitoring cameras 400 used will depend on a number of factors, such as, but not limited to, the viewing angle of each monitoring camera 400 and the amount of viewing coverage desired. For example, FIG. 4E shows a helmet

685 with a monitoring camera system 686 having three monitoring cameras 400 (Right facing R, Left facing L, Back facing B), each with a viewing angle A of approximately 90 degrees. FIG. 4F shows another embodiment of a helmet 685 with a monitoring camera system 687 having two monitoring cameras 400 (Right R and Back B facing, Left and Back B facing), each with a viewing angle A of approximately 120 degrees. FIG. 4G shows a further embodiment of a helmet 685 with a monitoring camera system 688 having one monitoring camera 400 (Back B facing), with a viewing angle A of approximately 160 degrees. Where more than one monitoring camera 400 is employed, the monitoring cameras 400 do not have to be the same type.

[87] Images from the monitoring cameras 400 may be transmitted to a miniature flip-down screen 689 on the helmet 685 that is viewed by the fighter. The screen 689 may be a night-vision screen for providing infrared vision to the fighter. Similarly, the monitoring cameras 400 may be infrared cameras for providing night vision or vision during sandstorms, fog, or other inclement environmental conditions. The monitoring cameras 400 may zoom in on a particular target, to increase accuracy.

[88] The monitoring camera system 686, 687, 688 not only provides 360-degree vision for the fighter day and night, but may also act as a full-time warning device for the fighter. The monitoring camera system 686, 687, 688 may include software that provides "motion" detection. With this protection and combined day/night camera capability, any motion behind the fighter may be alarmed by an audible mechanism (e.g., one or more speakers) and/or a tactile mechanism (e.g., one or more vibrating devices) in one or more locations of the helmet 682 (e.g., front, back, left, right). The

location of the movement may be flashed or otherwise highlighted on the screen 689.

If, for example, the fighter is standing guard duty, and someone approaches the fighter from behind, the fighter may view the approaching person while facing in another direction.

[89] The monitoring camera system 686, 687, 688 may include a sleeping guard protection mechanism, where if the guard fighter wearing the helmet 685 falls asleep, the sleeping guard protection mechanism of the monitoring camera system 686, 687, 688 may determine if the helmet 685 tilts a predetermined angle amount and cause the audible mechanism (e.g., one or more speakers) and/or the tactile mechanism (e.g., one or more vibrating devices) in the helmet 685 to function, waking the guard fighter. If motion is detected behind the guard fighter, the guard fighter may be alarmed by an audible mechanism (e.g., one or more speakers) and/or a tactile mechanism (e.g., one or more vibrating devices) in one or more locations of the helmet 682 (e.g., front, back, left, right) to indicate to the guard fighter where the activity is occurring. Thus, the monitoring camera system 686, 687, 688 provides 360-degree vision for the fighter day and night, asleep or awake.

[90] It should be noted that one or more of the features described above with respect to the firearm shot helmet detection system 681 may be incorporated into the helmet 685 and monitoring camera system 686, 687, 688, and, conversely, one or more features described above with respect to the monitoring camera system 686, 687, 688 may be incorporated into the firearm shot helmet detection system 681.

[91] With reference to FIG. 5, another application of the detection system will now be described. A detection system 700 similar to the detection system 100 described above may be used to detect a tire leak 710 from a tire 725 of a vehicle 720 such as a truck 730 and/or trailer 740 and initiate an alarm in response thereto. A damaged or blown tire 725 can be a dangerous hazard for the driver of a vehicle 720 and/or other drivers on the road in the vicinity of the vehicle. For example, a blown tire from a large truck can cause the truck to swerve erratically and jackknife. Not only is this dangerous for the driver and any passengers of the truck, but it poses a real hazard to surrounding vehicles. The swerving truck may collide with other vehicles on the road or may cause vehicles to swerve, increasing the probability of one or more vehicle accidents. Further, if the blown tire remains on the road, vehicles may swerve to miss the tire or may collide with the tire, increasing the probability of additional vehicle accidents.

[92] A blown or severely damaged tire usually results from a small hole or tear in the tire 725. This small hole or tear usually emits a leaking noise 710 caused by compressed air escaping the small hole or tear in the tire 725. If a vehicle driver and/or dispatcher, e.g., truck dispatcher, knew of a tire leak 710 in one of the tires 725 of the vehicle 720, the driver could have the tire repaired, replaced, or take the necessary precautions. Thus, the inventors of the vehicle tire leak detection system 700 and method recognized that such a system and method could detect whether a tire leak 710 had occurred and alert the vehicle driver and/or dispatcher accordingly.

[93] The tire leak detection system 700 includes a base unit 750 and one or more sensors 760. Instead of the one or more sensors 110 and/or base unit 120 described

above with respect to FIGS. 1-3 being configured to detect whether the sound signature of a graffiti-making act occurred, the one or more sensors 760 and/or base unit 750 may detect whether the sound signature of a tire leak 710 occurred.

[94] It should be noted, the one or more sensors 760 and/or base unit 750 may determine whether a tire 725 is going flat by detecting sounds indicative of a tire going flat other than a tire leak 710. For example, as a tire 725 goes flat, a unique noise may be made as the tire 725 contacts the road, e.g., the tire may make a slapping sound of a detectable characteristic frequency or frequencies. This sound or other sounds may be the basis of determining whether a tire 725 is going flat.

[95] The base unit 750 may be mounted to the vehicle 720 in a strategic location such as, but not by way of limitation, a rear side 770 of a cab 780 if the vehicle 720 is a truck or somewhere on a chassis 790 of the vehicle 720. Similarly, the one or more sensors 760 may be mounted to the vehicle 720 in a strategic location such as, but not by way of limitation, on the chassis 790 of the vehicle 720, adjacent the tires 725. As described above, the one or more sensors 760 may be integrated with the base unit 750 or separate therefrom. Because the tire leak detection system 700 is so similar in construction to the graffiti detection system 100 described above, further details as to the construction or structure of the tire leak detection system 700 will not be described in additional detail. The discussion above with respect to the construction of the graffiti detection system 100 is equally applicable to the tire leak detection system 700, and is thereby incorporated by reference.

[96] An embodiment of a method of using the tire leak detection system 700 will now be described. It is common for the tire 725 of a vehicle 720 to become damaged during normal use by sharp objects such as nails, glass, etc. A cut or hole in the tire 725 caused by the sharp object may cause a leak 710. The tire leak 710 is a precursor to further tire damage, and a potential multiple vehicle accident, as described above. The tire leak 710 emits sound waves having a characteristic sound signature frequency or frequency pattern. The tire leak 710 may have a unique sound signature frequency or frequency pattern for different types of leaks, at different tire pressures, for different types of tires, etc.

[97] The one or more sensors 760 convert the sound from the tire leak 710 into an electronic signal or electronic signals that are processed by the electronics 210 in the base unit 750 to determine whether the electronic signal(s) represent one or more different types of tire leaks. If it is determined that the electronic signal(s) represents a tire leak, one or more alarms are initiated. The one or more alarms may include one or more of the alarms described above with respect to the graffiti detection system 100 and method. Preferably, the one or more alarms include a communication to the driver of the vehicle 720 alerting the driver that a tire leak 710 has been detected. If the vehicle 720 is a large truck 730 and/or trailer 740, an additional alarm may include a communication to a truck dispatcher alerting the dispatcher that a tire leak 710 has been detected.

[98] Similar to the detection system 100 described above, the tire leak detection system 700 may include an automatic location identification device such as a GPS

device for identifying the location of the tire leak detection system 700, and, hence, the location of the vehicle.

[99] Reported information to the driver and/or dispatcher may include, but not by way of limitation, a tire leak has been detected, the time of the tire leak, the wheel that the leak is from, the location of the vehicle, and/or the type of tire leak. Thus, the tire leak detection system 700 detects the sound of one or more tire leaks 710 of a vehicle 720, and automatically alerts the driver and/or the dispatcher in response thereto.

[100] With reference to FIG. 6, another application of the detection system will now be described. Problems can occur as a result of conduct or acts that cause the emission of a sound of a characteristic frequency or frequencies. If the conduct or act could be detected and reported immediately, the frequency of the resulting problem may be eliminated or reduced. An exemplary scenario is the unauthorized use by an unauthorized co-worker or other individual 800 of an authorized individual's equipment. A detection system 810 similar to the detection system 100 described above may be used to detect a sound or other characteristic 820 indicative of the use of equipment 830 such as a computer, cash register, copy machine or any other equipment one wishes to protect or prevent the unauthorized use of and initiate an alarm in response thereto.

[101] During operation or use of equipment 830, especially electronic equipment, one or more sounds or other characteristics 810 occur that indicate the equipment 830 is being used. Examples include, but not by way of limitation, one or more beeps from a computer upon start-up, the ring of a cash register when a the register drawer is

opened, the humming of a fan or hard drive in a computer, the transmittance of signals in a computer, the typing on a computer keyboard, the dialing or connecting sound of a facsimile machine, and the noise emitted during the scanning step of a copy machine. If an authorized individual, employer, etc. knew the equipment 830 was being used without authorization, the necessary precautions, remedial action, etc. could be taken. Thus, the inventors of the equipment use detection system 810 and method recognized that such a system and method could detect whether one or more sounds or other characteristics 820 indicative of equipment use had occurred and alert the authorized individual, employer, etc. accordingly.

[102] The equipment use detection system 810 includes a base unit 840 and one or more sensors 850. Instead of the one or more sensors 110 and/or base unit 120 described above with respect to FIGS. 1-3 being configured to detect whether the sound signature of a graffiti-making act occurred, the one or more sensors 850 and/or base unit 840 may detect whether one or more sounds or other characteristics 810 indicative of equipment use occurred.

[103] The base unit 840 and one or more sensors 850 (if the one or more sensors 850 are separate from the base unit 840) are preferably mounted in one or more strategic locations that are inconspicuous and where they are not likely to be tampered with or damaged. In one embodiment, the base unit 840 and one or more sensors 850 are not connected directly to the equipment 830 being monitored, inhibiting the unauthorized individual 800 from spotting the equipment. The base unit 840 could be mounted on a wall 860, under a desk or table 870, or any other strategic location. As described above,

the one or more sensors 850 may be integrated with the base unit 840 or separate therefrom. Because the equipment use detection system 810 is so similar in construction to the graffiti detection system 100 described above, further details as to the construction or structure of the equipment use detection system 810 will not be described in additional detail. The discussion above with respect to the construction of the graffiti detection system 100 is equally applicable to the equipment use detection system 810, and is thereby incorporated by reference.

[104] An embodiment of a method of using the equipment use detection system 810 will now be described. The equipment 830 may emit sound waves 820 having a characteristic sound signature frequency or frequency pattern. Different types of equipment use may cause different sounds having a unique sound signature frequency or frequency pattern. Further, the same type of equipment 830 may emit different sounds indicative of equipment use.

[105] The one or more sensors 850 may include one or more sonic sensors that convert the sound from the equipment use into an electronic signal or electronic signals that are processed by the electronics 210 in the base unit 840 to determine whether the electronic signal(s) represent one or more different types of equipment use. If it is determined that the electronic signal(s) represents equipment use, one or more alarms are initiated. The one or more alarms may include one or more of the alarms described above with respect to the graffiti detection system 100 and method. Preferably, the one or more alarms include a communication to the authorized individual, the employer, security, police, etc. indicating that equipment use has been detected. An additional

type of alarm that may be initiated if, for example, the equipment 830 is electronic is an automatic shut-down mechanism that shuts down, e.g., cuts power to, the equipment 830.

[106] Similar to the detection system 100 described above, the equipment use detection system 810 may include an automatic location identification device such as a GPS device for identifying the location of the equipment use detection system 810.

Such an automatic location identification device may be desirable if the equipment is of a mobile nature such as an automobile.

[107] Reported information to the authorized individual, the employer, security, police, etc. may include, but not by way of limitation, an equipment use has been detected, the time of the equipment use, the type of equipment use, and/or the location of the equipment use. Thus, the equipment use detection system 810 detects the use of one or more different types of equipment use, and automatically alerts the authorized individual, the employer, security, police, etc. in response thereto.

[108] The detection system 810 may be used to detect the use of electronic and non-electronic equipment 830. Further, the one or more sensors 850 may include one or more types of sensors other than sonic sensors that detect use of the equipment other than through detection of an emitted sound. For example, the one or more sensors could determine that a carbon monoxide detector has been actuated and communicate this to one or more entities in the manner described above.

[109] In another scenario, instead of the detection system 810 detecting and reporting the act of equipment use, the detection system 810 may detect and report other acts

such as the conduct of a baby crying. With more and more parents becoming full-time working parents, the need for baby or childcare has increased dramatically in recent years. One of the biggest concerns of parents who have hired full or part-time baby or childcare is that their baby or child be treated properly by the childcare. This has been an increasing concern in recent times with the numerous reports of nannies severely abusing babies. In another embodiment, the detection system 810 may be adapted to detect and report an act of interest such as the crying of a baby. The one or more sensors 850 may pick up the characteristic frequency or frequencies of a baby's cry and the base unit 840 may process the signal(s) to determine if the signal(s) correspond to a baby's cry, and, if so, initiate one or more alarms. One alarm may be communicating to one or both of the parents that the baby is crying. This communication may be made by any well-known manner, e.g., e-mail, page, telephone call, cellphone call, videophone call, etc. The parent(s) could then check on the baby's condition by, for example, contacting the hired childcare, viewing a video image of the baby transmitted by the communication or by other means, etc.

[110] Although the detection system has been described in conjunction with detecting a graffiti-making act, a firearm shot, a vehicle tire leak, and an act or conduct such as equipment use and the crying of a baby, and actuating an alarm in response thereto, it will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art that the detection system described above may be used in other applications such as, but not by way of limitation.

[111] While preferred methods and embodiments have been shown and described, it will be apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art that numerous alterations may be

made without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention. Therefore, the invention is not to be limited except in accordance with the following claims.